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Bio information: **BEAT CIRCUS**

Title: **BOY FROM BLACK MOUNTAIN** (Cuneiform Rune 294)

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FILE UNDER: ROCK / AMERICANA / WEIRD AMERICAN GOTHIC

"The rich and tight orchestrations feature a Morricone-inspired combination of harmonica, viola, banjo, guitar, tuba, violin, trombone, upright bass, and drums." – The New Yorker

"...It's an odd but rewarding journey, a trip down the back roads and through the forgotten towns of the mind, finding formerly hidden treasures along the way. At once unique and familiar, Beat Circus take American music to exotic places that feel strangely like its roots." – The Big Takeover

"Boston's circus of malcontents not only has the chops but features a fallen hellfire preacher/band leader (the captivating Brian Carpenter) who simultaneously channels Nick Cave and Johnny Cash." – The Village Voice

Boy From Black Mountain is the third release from determinedly eclectic Boston-based ensemble **Beat Circus**. The album was produced by lead singer, songwriter and founding member **Brian Carpenter** with **Bryce Goggin (Pavement, Akron/Family, Antony and the Johnsons, Bishop Allen)** and marks the second release in Carpenter's "Weird American Gothic" trilogy. Singer **Larkin Grimm** (whose *Parplar* CD Carpenter performed on) and cellist **Julia Kent** (Antony and the Johnsons) are special guests who appear throughout the album. Illustrator **Carson Ellis**, best known for her work with **the Decemberists** and on children's books, provided the cover illustration and artwork.

Multi-instrumentalist Brian Carpenter began writing **Boy From Black Mountain** shortly after his son was diagnosed with autism in late 2006. A number of songs such as "Boy From Black Mountain" and "Saturn Song" (a duet with Grimm) were inspired by the experience of living with his son during the time of his diagnosis and treatment. Other compositions were inspired by the lives of his father and grandparents, watermelon farmers in the rural Bible Belt; their titles are drawn from works of classic Southern Gothic literature while the sound is deeply influenced by venerable regional musical traditions. "As I Lay Dying", for instance, is a hillbilly foot-stomper wreathed in Gothic atmosphere. Meanwhile "The Life You Save May Be Your Own" is based on Brian's father's life growing up in the Florida panhandle.

Carpenter formed Beat Circus shortly after his arrival in Boston in 2002 and he's been its guiding light and only constant member since the ensemble's inception. He had been born and reared in the state of Florida into a large Southern Baptist family and raised on a steady diet of old-timey and Southern Gospel music. Throughout middle and high school, he played trumpet in school concert and jazz orchestras. When he settled in Gainesville in 1990 to study engineering, he soon became part of the fertile local music scene playing with bands like **Less Than Jake, Aleka's Attic, What It Is**, and **Sister Hazel** in the early part of the decade. During this time, Carpenter also organized one of the biggest music festivals of the Southeast, the "Gainesville Jazz & Pop Festival."

In 2001, Carpenter moved to Boston to direct a film documentary on the life and legacy of **Albert Ayler** with a group of MIT and NYU film students. From 2001-2005, Brian produced the free-form experimental radio show "Free Association" on WZBC-FM at Boston College. He also began collaborating with banjo player **Brandon Seabrook**, laying the foundation for the original Beat Circus line-up. Recruiting other players including **Alec K. Redfearn (the Eyesores)**, Brian launched Beat Circus initially performing instrumental free-improvisations using traditional circus songs as a jumping-off point. After playing live in Cambridge throughout the summer of 2003, Beat Circus recorded its debut **Ringleaders Revolt** which was released the following year.

In 2005, Carpenter began composing music for Beat Circus, working out arrangements that now included vocal parts. The results would be **Dreamland**, produced by **Martin Bisi**. *Dreamland*, was a "fantastical, extravagant, largely instrumental circus/folk-song cycle about the infamous 1900s Coney Island theme park of the same name" (as the *Boston Phoenix* enthused). *Dreamland* marked the first installment in Brian's "Weird American Gothic" series and was released by **Cuneiform Records** in January 2008. Soon after the completion of *Dreamland*, Redfearn departed to focus on his own band The Eyesores, and Carpenter put together the current incarnation of Beat Circus who would then record *Boy From Black Mountain*. Taking over as lead vocalist, Brian brought in violinist **Paran Amirinazari** and violist **Jordan Voelker** (who also provide background vocals), trombonist **Doug LaRosa**, and the rockabilly-style rhythm section composed of upright bassist **Paul Dilley** (from **Reverend Glasseye**), guitarist/banjoist **Andrew Stern**, and drummer **Gavin McCarthy** (from **Karate and Glorytellers**).

For more information, please visit Beat Circus online at: www.beatcircus.net & www.myspace.com/beatcircus

PROMOTIONAL PHOTOS



Digital [High-Resolution / Color] versions of these images are available for download on www.cuneiformrecords.com in the "Press" section.

The following is an excerpt from a *Boston Phoenix* feature on Brian Carpenter and the inspiration for *Boy From Black Mountain*. The full article can be viewed @ <http://thebostonphoenix.com/Boston/Music/74605-Southern-exposure/>

THE BOSTON PHOENIX

"Southern exposure: **Beat Circus's Brian Carpenter returns to his roots**"
By **BARRY THOMPSON** | January 7, 2009

"Among countless other — and potentially more constructive — applications for music, escapism is a favorite. But that's not just for listeners. Multi-instrumentalist and Beat Circus patriarch Brian Carpenter has made his share of escapist music, but he's also written dozens of songs that confront real life, from an estranged cultural heritage to his own role as a musician to the trauma of his son's brush with a brain-development disorder.

"I remember coming home from work and my wife told me the news really gently," says Carpenter, explaining a sequence of events that helped shape *Boy from Black Mountain*, the next Beat Circus record. "We just went into the kitchen and cried for hours. It wasn't a big surprise. We had started seeing behavior patterns during the months prior, but we never wanted to believe it was autism."

This was a little more than two years ago, when Beat Circus were polishing *Dreamland*...the first installment of Carpenter's Weird American Gothic Trilogy. ... *Dreamland* is a fantastical, extravagant, largely instrumental circus/folk-song cycle about the infamous 1900s Coney Island theme park of the same name. Its aura was darkly antithetical to Carpenter's own state of affairs. In 2007, Beat Circus would perform live only once.

"I spent that time writing songs about my son, trying to see things through his eyes, and about the phases of what we went through as parents," he says over the phone...during a break from mixing *Boy from Black Mountain*. "Seeing the signs, getting the diagnosis, him being in a constant rage all night long, getting the treatment, and really seeing him almost come out of that spectrum, entering into our world, and finally making eye contact and speaking to us. Now, no one would be able to tell." Autism isn't generally thought to be curable, but Carpenter's son, who was three years old at the time of his diagnosis, no longer exhibits any obvious symptoms and seems set for a more or less normal life.

While enduring his son's struggle, Carpenter found a muse in a different breed of literature. Penning the congenially subdued title track off *Boy from Black Mountain*, he had in mind *Harold and the Purple Crayon*, the classic children's tale in which the title character draws his own reality. Then again, journeys through the abyss between perception and actuality could just as easily characterize the Beat Circus project as a whole. ...

...the handful of freshly mixed *Boy from Black Mountain* tracks...are miles away from boisterous carnival music. "The February Train" recalls traditional Cajun balladry, its bittersweet countenance atypical of the nouveau noir-Americana sect. "The Life You Save May Be Your Own" is a country-billy rouser coated with ghost-story æthereality. Skittish violins and Carpenter's newly employed throat singing...forge a visceral anxiety on "The Quick and the Dead." Contemporary, urban-dwelling Americana acts who return to someone else's roots are always suspect. But Beat Circus have no such problem: Carpenter was raised close to the source, in a devout Baptist household in the rural Florida panhandle. "A lot of these songs are stories handed down from my dad about his life growing up as a watermelon farmer. I recently sent him a mix we just finished, and he loved it. He didn't seem so interested in the process of what I was doing. When I gave him that song, which is all about him growing up in this cracker house, it was really moving and gratifying and opened up this big dialogue between us." ...

"My dad was sitting at the dining room table," he recalls, "and I said, 'Oh, there's no culture down here.' I remember my dad yelling at the top of his lungs: 'I think the South has a lot of culture!' I never thought he'd get that defensive about it. Of course he was right. Your family heritage and everything related to your family starts to affect everything you see and eventually ends up in your art, somehow. It took a while, in my case." ..."